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A New Flag for the Socialist Party

Robert Delson

A NEW program is always like running up a flag publicly and the world judges the party by this flag." *

So wrote Frederick Engels to August Bebel in commenting on the draft of the Gotha Program of the German party. How applicable his words are to a document which, if adopted, will be the first basic program formulated by the Socialist Party.

The need for a program is of course vastly intensified by the events of the past few years in Germany, Austria and Spain, and more particularly now by the incredible somersault of the Communist International at its Seventh Congress. Lenin denounced the Social Democrats for burying Marxism in the name of Marxism. Now the communists, preaching a crass opportunism, are interring Marxism and Leninism in the name of both masters.

The Analysis of Capitalism and of Its Decline

The program begins by explaining the basic antagonism between the propertyless working class and the propertied employing class: Undisposable surpluses are created and crises are inevitably engendered. The growth of capitalism accentuates its diseases so that in the precise degree to which it develops the forces of production it develops as well the conditions for its destruction. The draft then demonstrates why capitalism can no longer hope to solve its crises by the usual devices. The analysis is well done, but should be improved in at least two respects.

First, it should show more fully why this crisis of capitalism, unlike previous ones, is not the prelude to a new period of real recovery. It should point out that the cyclical factors (such as the liquidation of bankrupt enterprises, which by restoring equilibrium create the conditions of an upward swing) have been rendered ineffective by the rigid controls imposed by monopoly capitalism and state regulation. It should also show how the non-cyclical, and more fundamental factors, which are necessary to take advantage of restored equilibrium, no longer operate with their accustomed vigor because the old industries are not capable of any real expansion under capitalism and no new industries, especially none requiring investment in heavy goods, are on the horizon.

In the second place, the program should indicate how the process of capitalist growth not only effects its own economic decay, but also creates its own grave-diggers by providing conditions favorable to the growth of the organizations of the working class.

But this section of the program is nevertheless adequate as a basis for drawing correct political inferences. Marxism is an integrated system, and its political theory follows inexorably from its economic postulates. In Marxist thought it had always been axiomatic that socialism was possible *only* because capitalism was bound to pass through increasingly severe crises, and that con-

* Engel's letter to Bebel March 18, 1875. (*Critique of the Gotha Program*, p. 60, International Publishers.)

sequently it was the duty of socialists to seize a period of decline as the occasion for taking power. Most certainly Marxism did not dictate that the task of socialists was to attempt to overcome the crises of capitalism—and, of course, they knew that they could not possibly do so, even if they wanted to, in the light of the Marxist doctrines.

But the German socialists in 1919 and the English laborites in 1923 and 1928 apparently thought otherwise. They proclaimed that the mission of socialists was to restore capitalism to its normal functioning before an attempt was made to introduce collectivism. Despite the insistence of the Germans on the purity of their Marxism, their adherence to such a theory was a rejection of the Marxist economic doctrine.

The Analysis of Fascism

A famous military writer has said that war is a continuation of politics by other methods—i.e., by force. It might well be said of fascism that it is a continuation of capitalism by other methods—and again, by force.

This is not altered by the fact that it utilizes the device of a militant mass movement of the crushed middle class and the slogans of a battle against "capitalism"—only to betray the middle class in the hour of the common "victory"

The analysis of fascism is deficient in a number of important particulars. The program fails to define, adequately, what fascism is or what it does. While it is pointed out that fascism is an agency to preserve the existing system by new economic and political devices, the distinction between these two aspects of the movement is not clearly drawn. It might well be pointed out that on the economic side, fascism is merely an intensification of state capitalism, and that fascism seeks to prevent crises by imposing more rigorous state controls, (particularly of credit institutions) by differential taxation of various industries, and by increasing the tendency towards national self-sufficiency. It should be clearly shown that these economic devices are doomed to failure and that fascism itself is therefore similarly doomed. On the political side, the program makes the vague statement that fascism tries to prevent "any expression of the class struggle". It would be wise to indicate concretely that this means the outlawing not only of the struggle for the overthrow of the existing system but also of the struggle to improve conditions within the framework of the system.

The draft then goes on to a consideration of the key postulates of Marxist political theory—the theory of the state, democracy, the attainment of power, and the maintenance of power.

The State and Democracy

The state is shown to be an instrument of the owning class to insure the dominance of that class with the least amount of disruption to the economic processes of capitalism. The state "is the totality of the government and its apparatus, the means of coercion (army, navy, police, etc.) and the legal structure". (Page 14, Draft Program.)

It might well be added that in the last analysis the state rests on armed force and could not exist without it.

The essential class character of the state and the dominance of the owning class are not affected by the existence of democratic and parliamentary rights, the draft properly declares. But the reasons for this should be more fully set forth. This class structure would be altered only if capitalism could be abol-

ished *by instruments provided by the state itself,* either through a peaceful transfer of power, or by a gradual accumulation of changes without a transfer of power. That both of these alternatives are impossible would appear from an analysis of the complex of "rights" embraced within capitalist democracy.

These rights fall into two chief categories, secondary and fundamental:

1. The secondary rights, which include the right to agitate for and organize to bring about changes in the system, and to *agitate* for and *organize* for the overthrow of the system.
2. The fundamental right *actually* to overthrow the system and maintain a socialist government.

The first category of rights may again be subdivided into at least three groups:

a. Civil rights—the right to speak in public, to assemble, to write and to publish one's views.
b. Organizational rights—the right to associate, whether in unions, political parties, or otherwise, and to act collectively by strike, boycott, or otherwise.
c. Parliamentary rights—the right to vote, to campaign, and to bring about reforms through legislation.

These rights are not classless institutions, having an existence independent of the state. The state which grants these rights always retains the power to withdraw them—unless the workers are strong enough to prevent the with drawal. But that demonstrates only that what the workers ultimately rely upon to obtain the advantages flowing from these rights is their own strength, and not these rights in themselves.

The ruling class is willing to permit the use of those rights which are directed to the obtaining of advantages within the system because, and only so long as, these advantages induce the workers not to attempt to exercise the more fundamental right of changing the social system.

It follows logically enough that actually to overthrow a state resting on force the workers must ultimately rely on the use of, (or the readiness to use) their own superior strength, and not on their legal rights.

From this it should not be deduced that democratic rights under capitalism are of no value to the workers. On the contrary these rights, particularly the secondary ones, are of immense utility. It is sufficient merely to enumerate them in order to indicate the incredible stupidity manifested by the Communist International in its third period when it refused to recognize their basic role in the struggle for power. Without these advantages the labor movement is reduced to a mere conspiracy and deprived of the opportunity to declare its program and organize its forces. But, it is certainly as important to remember that the actual exercise of the more fundamental right to transform the social order is a practical impossibility.

Moreover, even this more fundamental class of democratic rights has utility for us. It is far easier to attract followers to a movement which has the right to bring about the changes it advocates than to an outlawed sect. Furthermore, if a parliamentary majority should be achieved by the workers, millions of those who waver in their allegiance, particularly the members of the armed forces, will be won over to the new government. Note how meticu lously efforts are made to drape the cloak of legality about every act of constituted governments.*

Moreover a parliamentary majority, which confers the legal right to over-

* For full elaboration of these two questions see the brilliant article *Socialism and the Myth of Legality* by Felix Cohen in the November 1935 issue, Volume 4, No. 3, of the American Socialist Quarterly.

throw capitalism, is not impossible of attainment. It is a definite probability in certain countries, as the program points out. Of course, the achievement of a parliamentary majority does not mean the achievement of the *actual,* as distinguished from the nominal, power to effect socialism. As the program states:

> "the working class, indeed, should prefer to come into power peacefully and democratically, but that is an alternative which at the best is unlikely." (Page 19.)

The word "power", as used in the program, is obviously intended in the sense of real power, based on the dictatorship of the proletariat, and resting on the extra-parliamentary organs of the working class and its allies. When the term "power" is used in this sense it is obvious that there is only one road to "power", i.e., through establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

But, of course, it is possible (although it may not be desirable) to use the term "power" in another sense, viz. in the sense of the nominal and for the most part illusory (though not useless) right conferred by a parliamentary majority. That was the sense in which the term was used in the last militant program. Therefore, the previous program could properly state that Marxists always believed that there was more than one road to power. In substance, our views come to this: The marshalling of our extra-parliamentary and decisive forces would be facilitated by the achievement of parliamentary victory.

The quotation from the program does not mean, however, that a parliamentary majority "is an alternative which at the best is unlikely", but rather that the peaceful attainment of *actual* power "is an alternative which at the best is unlikely." In the face of the general belief in the radical movement that a labor party is the next step forward for the American workers, it is inconsistent to ignore the possibility (as do some of these same radicals) of the attainment of a parliamentary victory. Just as we must utilize the democratic rights to organize for the overthrow of the system, we must utilize the possibility of achieving the legal right to govern. But we must never forget that such a victory is not only hollow but a dangerous trap unless we are prepared to breathe into it the life of our extra-parliamentary organizations, built up far in advance of such a victory.

How to Defend Democracy

The program renders an important service in emphasizing that the proper method of retaining and extending workers' rights, and social reforms, is "not by making compromises with the capitalist forces but rather by waging an aggressive struggle against them . . . the battle to retain workers' rights must be fought not only outside of parliament but against the state." *

The failure of the working class to carry on a struggle for the defense of the first category of democratic rights facilitates the coming of fascism which, as indicated above, effects the destruction of *all* democratic rights.

"Armed Insurrection" and "The Dictatorship of the Proletariat"

Neither of these terms is used in the program. Why?

The program properly emphasizes that the seizure of power is possible only in given objective circumstances—that is, during a period of chaos and crisis (Page 19). Of course this con-

* The inspiration for this significant reminder comes from the fruiful article of David Felix on "A Basis for a Proposed Program of Revolutionary Socialism", Vol. 3, No. 3, American Socialist Quarterly.

stitutes a complete rejection of the idea of putsch—of an uprising by a picked body of armed men at a given signal, irrespective of the existence of material conditions appropriate for a real transfer of power. But the term "armed insurrection" is susceptible of being interpreted or misinterpreted as just such an uprising. For that reason alone it would be a mistake to use the term. In the second place, it implies not only an illegal, but an unprovoked offensive. Our strategy should be to defend democratic rights to the utmost, and to make the defense a basic slogan to win the masses. Our creation of extra-parliamentary forces is necessary primarily because the ruling class will not recognize our democratic rights. It is not we who are the "insurrectionists" (in the Blanquist sense) but they! For analogous reasons the draft eschews the term "dictatorship of the proletariat". But it is unequivocally clear from the program that it is in full accord with the real content of the term. The draft emphasizes the need of a workers' and farmers' government which will "automatically exclude the capitalist and non-producers", "destroy the economic power of the capitalist class", and wherever necessary utilize the "instruments of repression" (Pages 18, 17).

The Role of the Socialist Party and Its Tactics

The program then elaborates upon the role of the Socialist Party as the representative of the general and ultimate interest of the working class, in distinction to the organizations representing its partial interests only. The draft next examines the tactics to be pursued by the party with respect to the more fundamental issues facing it.

It repudiates the view that the party should observe a policy of neutrality towards the unions, and plainly states the party policy on significant labor issues which it requires its members to observe. It is pointed out that only in this way will the party win the workers to struggle for the revolution itself. The program reiterates our refusal to support any capitalist government either in the pursuit of war or in preparation for war. It rejects the attempt to convert the revolutionary threat "turn the imperialist war into civil war" into the chauvinist promise "turn the imperialist war into civil peace".

It declares for a labor party and for taking serious action to form a party when it becomes a real possibility instead of an eager hope.

It emphasizes the fact that the purpose of the united front is to move large masses of workers into action and not to create the illusion of a mass movement by bringing together two small political groups.

The program unequivocally re-states the revolutionary position on the Soviet Union. It recognizes the Soviet Union as the first workers' country and pledges to defend it against all capitalist attacks, while reserving the right to criticize its policies.

Finally, the program stresses the inner democracy of the Socialist Party and reaffirms its well established principle of "freedom of discussion and unity of action."

The most serious omission in the draft is its failure to present a program for winning the farmers to the Socialist Party or for their immediate needs within the system. But despite occasional errors, we may rest assured that if this program is adopted the flag we are "running up publicly" will be unmistakably red.

The American Student Union Faces The Student Anti-War Strike

Harold Draper

AMONG the student organizations of America, the American Student Union distinguishes itself by the boast: the ASU is the only *militant* student movement. It is therefore in a warning spirit that the observer must report: *there are two forces sapping the militancy of the ASU—the liberals and the communists.* This united front may appear surprising to those who accept the Hearstian view of the communists as the wild men of Union Square. But readers of the socialist press know what the "new line" of the Comintern means. It means an opportunism which differs from previous expressions of opportunism in this respect—that it is systematized, thoroughgoing, and imposed throughout the communist movement with the *gleichschaltung* of doctrine peculiar to the "monolithic" hulk that is the Comintern.

The Young Communist League students have been *gleichgeschaltet.* The virus is now spreading into the ASU and into the student strike.

The Trend Toward Liberal Opportunism

The key to the understanding of the trend in the ASU lies in the fact that the policy of the "People's Front" is being applied to the student field. How easy is such an application—and how doubly dangerous! For the student movement is essentially middle-class in class base. It is therefore especially important here to retain the leadership of the working-class elements. The "tactic of the People's Front" does just the reverse.

The "People's Front" is designed to ally the middle-class elements to the working class *by catering—kowtowing* —rather than aggressive leadership for working-class demands, which are also shown to be the only way out of the middle-class dilemma. The "People's Front" restrains the working class to those demands and actions that are acceptable to middle-class liberals, it pulls the working class down to their level. A "People's Front" can never get beyond a middle-class level (and is therefore doomed to futility), because any such attempt inevitably is declared out of order with the cry: "We shall antagonize the liberals!"

This is the situation in the ASU. The cry "We shall antagonize the liberals!" has been put into the balance against the program and traditions of the ASU and has been found weightier. And the YCL is the leader in this tendency.

The most important and most sinister example of this trend is the opposition to cooperation with, and participation in, the organized labor movement—in strikes, etc.

The old Student League for Industrial Democracy felt that one of its most important contributions to the student movement was its work in linking student struggles with labor struggles, not

only through expressions of platonic sympathy, or through lectures on "Proletarian Literature and its Social Significance", but through actual involvement of students in picketing, in strike meetings. It felt—and demonstrated—that an hour on a picket line may telescope a long process of education toward social consciousness. Its very name—Student League for Industrial Democracy—was an index to its approach. As for the National Student League, it indeed specialized in aiding the dual "red" unions.

But of all actions that "antagonize liberals", picketing for a union on the outside is the worst. And so the damper is going down on labor action in the ASU. Not officially, by any means—by action "from below" by the YCL'ers.

A typical example from a New York high school, with regard to the elevator strike: A motion was made at the chapter meeting that the executive committee be asked to make plans to help the local strikers. The recognized YCL leaders in the chapter vigorously opposed the motion on two grounds: (1) it would drive away liberal support; and (2) the strike really has nothing to do with student problems. ***The motion was passed over the opposition of the YCL, with a section of the maligned "liberals" voting in favor.*** It is doubtful whether there would have been any significant liberal opposition if the YCL had not given them the lead and the arguments. This is "vanguardism" in reverse.

At a New York college, the elevator-men were non-union. For weeks, the YCL'ers resisted involving the ASU chapter in the question of unionization, even opposing "moral support". Here again, it is interesting to note that the non-socialist, non-communist members of the executive committee were antagonized—against the communists. However, in citing the reaction of the liberals in this case, we by no means wish to obscure the fact that a large section of liberal support is alienated by militant action. But there are liberals and liberals—we shall recur to this point later.

We do wish to emphasize that in this opposition to ASU participation in labor struggles, we see the "tactic of the People's Front" in all its glory—a "tactic" of tagging along in the wake of middle-class prejudices.

The Oxford Pledge

If the militancy of action of the ASU is being undermined by the shadow of the "People's Front", even more serious inroads are being made on its anti-war program. For after all, the YCL *is* in favor of aiding strikes, even if YCL'ers oppose the ASU's doing so. But ***the YCL is categorically and on principle opposed to the Oxford Pledge,*** which is the core of the anti-war program of the ASU.

This statement may be challenged: did not the YCL vote for the Oxford Pledge at the Columbus Convention of the ASU? Let us see.

The Oxford Pledge states that we shall "refuse to support any war conducted by the United States Government". These are not weasel words—they are unequivocal and not open to misinterpretation.

Do the communists believe that workers and students should refuse to support any war conducted by their imperialist government? Listen:

On February 7, the ***Daily Worker*** laid down the line as follows:

"Question: Would the Communist Party favor a war by one capitalist nation against

another capitalist nation if the latter were of a fascist character or one that is more hostile to the working class than the former?"

"*Answer:* The Communist Party is always against imperialist war. Its chief slogan today is the fight for peace. . . .

". . If Nazi Germany attacks one of the small neighboring countries, like the Baltic countries, or Czechoslovakia, peace will not be aided by letting Germany win a victory. Such a victory would merely be a license for the war-makers to continue their campaign of agression.

"In such a war, the duty of the working class of both countries would be to fight for the defeat of Germany, and this would certainly include fighting in the defending army of the small attacked country.

"The situation is even more clear in the case of an attack on the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union, France and Czechoslovakia are bound by a pact of mutual assistance against an aggressor to come to the defense of the attacked nation. Here a war by France or Czechoslovakia against Germany, coming as a result of an attack by Germany, would be a war in defense of the Soviet Union, even though France, Czechoslovakia and Germany are all capitalist countries.

"The Communist Party would vigorously support such a war because here, too, once Germany had begun the war, the defense of the Soviet Union and the defeat of Nazi Germany are the only possible road to peace. . ."

Yes, these are not weasel words—they are unequivocal and not open to misinterpretation. The Communists will "vigorously support" war conducted by the United States Government, *if*—the Government is allied on the side of the Soviet Union.

Does this really apply to the United States? Earl Browder thinks so. In his debate in New York with Norman Thomas, he stated:

"A situation can develop tomorrow when German and Japanese fascism will proceed to attack the Soviet Union. . . . Will the militant socialists adopt a position of neutrality? Will they advocate the slogan 'Keep America Out of War?' Impossible! . . . They must have a proletarian answer, a socialist one, the defense of the Soviet Union."

What stand *will* the Communist Party take when the war-triangle—America, Japan, USSR—flares up, through an attack by Japan? Call for or support war on the side of Japan? Monstrous. Raise the slogan: Keep America Out of War? "Impossible!" Well, then, they can only—*call for and support war against Japan. . . .*

This is the position of the Communist Party and the Young Communist League. It is with this position that the YCL approached the Oxford Pledge and the ASU.

The first time the question came up was at the Second American Youth Congress in July 1935. The delegate of the New York S L I D introduced a resolution stating that "we refuse to support any war conducted by the U. S. Government". Serril Gerber, leader of the NSL and a prominent member of the YCL, opposed it on the grounds: (1) that it was not proper to commit the Youth Congress to the Oxford Pledge; and anyway (2) who knows, maybe the U. S. Government *will* fight a progressive war! The resolution was tabled—to kill it while avoiding a vote on the principle.

After the Youth Congress, there went on simultaneously (1) agitation among YCL'ers on their rejection of the Oxford Pledge; (2) negotiations between the SLID and the NSL for amalgamation, in which the SLID insisted that the Oxford Pledge was a minimum programmatic condition for any united student organization. The communist leaders were presented with the choice: amalgamation *and* the Oxford Pledge, or neither. Opportunistically betraying in practice their opportunism in theory, they agreed to the first.

But while the leaders reluctantly accepted, communist students agitated up to the very day of the ASU convention, against including the Oxford Pledge in the ASU program—on the ground that it would "antagonize the liberals". At Columbus itself, YCL delegates at the SLID convention (held directly before that of the ASU) *voted against including the Pledge in the ASU program.* And then at the ASU convention, all YCL'ers carried out their compact and voted for it. No wonder (we are told—we obviously cannot vouch for it) most of the YCL caucus at Columbus was devoted to an explanation of their war line!

The ASU was, programmatically speaking, a "shot-gun" wedding. It did not lead to programmatic faithfulness.

Not that the YCL openly disavowed the Oxford Pledge! That would have been inexcusably stupid! The correct tactic was "merely" to leave it on paper as much as possible. And the means was at hand: "We must avoid antagonizing the liberals."

Was it proposed that the ASU use the Pledge as a plank in its campaign for control of a Student Council? The communists opposed it for fear of losing liberal support. Was it proposed that the ASU seek to incorporate the Pledge in the program of an anti-war committee or league? Ditto. *It was even proposed that the Oxford Pledge be dropped completely from the special program to be written for the high school section,* because it hindered legal recognition by the administration. On this point, a compromise was reached, whereby it was retained, with an "educational approach".

And Now—the Student Strike

All these forces are at work on the ASU as it faces the third Student Strike Against War this April.

For the last three years, the question aroused by the strike was: why call a strike? Or anyway, why do you have to call it a strike? Won't a peace assembly or some other non-strike action be just as good?

The answer of the militant student movement was: Only a strike can achieve what we want. Why?

1. Because only such action is a preparation—a "dress rehearsal", a "fire-drill", we called it—for the kind of action we shall have to take *in an actual war crisis.*

2. All year around, we hold peace meetings to listen to speakers tell us why war is no good; on Strike Day we *act.* The strike is a break with routine—the participant takes a step unusual for him, just as we shall most assuredly have to break with routine methods when faced with war. It leaves a definite impress upon the striker himself, which is the result of education through action. And it gives him a foretaste of the sort, and sources, of opposition he will have to meet, when the prevalent pacifism gives way to a pervading "patriotism".

3. The spectacular quality of a strike has a stimulating effect upon the people at large, which reacts healthfully upon the students themselves, in showing them that they can be a significant force.

For these reasons not even the most completely independent and student-controlled "peace assembly" is an adequate substitute for the strike. But even last year, individual NSL and also SLID chapters disgraced themselves by accepting as substitutes administration compromises which were emphatically worse than nothing. It is a positive blow to the true anti-war movement when the very people (certain school heads, etc.)

who will lead us into the next war are built up as "peace-lovers" on Strike Day.

This year, obviously even more, we are faced with the danger of typical "People's Front" demonstrations and meetings instead of anti-war strikes. The YCL, we understand, is officially backing the slogan of no-substitute-for-the-strike in the colleges, just as it officially supported the Oxford Pledge for the ASU, but we can expect the logic of the "People's Front tactic" to have its own way to an alarming extent.

This danger has already been indicated (by the middle of March) in two ways.

1. The original draft of the college strike call came out squarely for the Oxford Pledge. The inevitable objections came from prominent liberals; whereupon the YCL student leaders attempted to get the Pledge dropped from the call. Here again, a compromise was reached, the Oxford Pledge being retained but de-emphasized.

2. *The National Administrative Committee decided that its call for the high schools would not call for a strike,* but for a "peace action" on the basis of certain minimum conditions. After debate, the YCL'ers agreed to compromise to the extent of inserting in the body of the call the statement that the preferable form of peace action was a strike. The YPSL, on the contrary, supported the proposition that the high-school call be directly for a strike, though willing to concede that this year, because of the weakness of the high-school ASU, we state that we shall accept independent student-run assemblies.

To give up the call for a strike, we felt, was an impermissible step for a number of reasons:

(1) Those few advanced schools where a strike was possible would tend to be dragged down to the level of the more backward schools.

(2) Even where a strike was not possible (and experience has shown one cannot always tell in advance without trying), we must always keep *in the forefront* the idea that the strike is our real goal. To give up the strike call this year will do more to destroy an orientation toward a future strike than can be counteracted by any compensatory educational work. We must call for a strike for the sake of the future if not the present.

(3) The opponents of the strike call maintain that we shall be in a stronger position to call a strike after we have demonstrated that the administration refuses to allow an assembly. The idea is that the vacillating elements will say: "Well, the ASU did its best to reach a compromise; the only thing left to do is strike." But the danger is that we shall thus be building up, whether we want to or no, the idea that a strike is "justified" only after a "reasonable" action has been denied. There is also the danger that after we have built up liberal support for a peace assembly on our conditions, and after the demand is rejected, that liberal support will not carry over for a strike, but will rather press us to give up our conditions. The only way to counteract these tendencies is to call for a strike first and negotiate afterward.

(4) Even where it is not possible to go through with a strike, the more strike sentiment we build up, the more chance we have of getting a student-run assembly. In "practical" terms, we use it as a bargaining point. Phrased otherwise, we utilize pressure from the left to arrive at a more satisfactory resultant of

forces. This is another example that opportunism is not even good "practical politics".

Over the vigorous opposition of the YPSL, the peace-action call was adopted by a united front of the YCL and liberals, in which the lines blurred. They likewise rejected a proposal to call for a strike in the New York district only.

This decision, even more significant as a signpost than for its content, must be fought in every district and chapter (which have autonomy on the question) by all militant students.

Should We Be Afraid of Polarizing the Student Body?

We have repeated—perhaps too often —that the tag-line of "People's-Front" opportunism is: We Must Not Antagonize the Liberals. There is a variation on this theme. It runs: we must not picket, call for a strike, push the Oxford Pledge, etc., because *to do so would polarize the student body*—i.e., the militant students would gravitate in one direction, the rest of the students would be repulsed in the other direction, and it would be so much harder for us to reach them.

What is the meaning of such polarization? Is it an unmitigated evil? or do we *want* to polarize the students? Let us first understand how socialists must look upon a student movement.

First of all, the students are not a class by themselves. They have no common class interests to weld them into a homogeneous whole. A student organization is necessarily a *mixed-class organization,* predominantly middle-class in composition at that, which means that there are divergent, directly contradictory class forces acting upon it, that it is pulled in different directions at the same time.

Students as a group face two ways: one way is toward the working class and what it stands for; the other way is toward the ruling class. The first orientation determines the progressive section of the student body; the second orientation the reactionary section. The "swamp" in-between tends to line up with the camp that gives the boldest lead.

In this situation, the task of an organization like the ASU is to organize the *progressive* section of the students as an eventual ally of the working class, not to be diverted from this task by the reactionary elements *or by the "swamp".* It is not we who wish to polarize the student body; it is capitalist economy that has done so; the polarization that takes place on the student field is merely a reflection of that in society as a whole.

The meaning of this fear of polarization then becomes plain. Polarization in society — i.e., the intensification of class antagonisms—can be avoided only by the capitulation of the working class. Polarization on the student field can be avoided only by the capitulation of the militant elements to the "swamp" and through the "swamp" to the enemies of the working class.

This is the inner meaning of the trend in the ASU. This is the meaning of the "tactic of the People's Front". In this inexorable operation of class forces, good intentions are only an evidence of political blindness.

Aspects of Industrial Unionism

Jack Rubenstein

INDUSTRIAL unionism has emerged from the American Federation of Labor Convention as the most dynamic issue in the American labor movement. The socialist and radical movement has, more or less, supported the industrial form of organization in preference to that of the craft union.

Prior to the last A. F. of L. Convention, and the formation of the Committee for Industrial Organization, led by John L. Lewis, of the United Mine Workers of America, and by the powerful Needle Trades unions, industrial unionism at its best never passed the propaganda stage as an issue in the American Federation of Labor.

It is not my intention, in this brief article, to argue in favor of industrial unionism as a form of organization superior to that of the craft form. I simply wish to discuss some of the problems relating to the question. Now that industrial unionism has again become popular all sorts of notions will arise as to what industrial unionism is, and why real socialists take their stand uncompromisingly on its side.

First of all, I think it must be established that there is nothing revolutionary in the industrial form of organization merely because of its industrial character. A reading of the minority report on organizational policy of the A. F. of L., presented at the Atlantic City Convention, will give ample proof of the above statement. The United Mine Workers of America, which is the outstanding industrial organization, has shown itself capable of the most reactionary, as well as of the most militant policies. This organization is, at the very moment, tied to the apron-strings of the Roosevelt New Deal policy and pledged to his re-election as President.

However, industrial unionism does have potential revolutionary possibilities. The industrial form of organization makes it possible for the millions of semi-skilled and unskilled low paid workers to enter the trade union movement. A trade union movement embracing millions, instead of thousands, will, by its very nature, be compelled to fight if it is to win concessions for its members. It is because reactionaries in the labor movement sense this problem and are fearful of the struggle, that they so bitterly oppose (even though not openly) a form of organization that will include the unorganized unskilled workers.

It is not difficult to understand how, under somewhat favorable economic conditions, and without resorting to the class struggle, improvements for several thousand workers in industries, can be won, providing of course the small minority neglects the interest of the majority of workers. It is far easier for the employer to give a handful of skilled workers a $5.00 raise than to give tens of thousands the most trifling increase.

The trade unions are the grammar schools of the workers. It is in them and through them that the workers receive their first lessons in the class struggle.

This being the case it becomes the duty of every socialist to see to it that these schools are so conducted and so constructed as to make possible the entrance of all workers.

The old theory of the I.W.W. that no strike is really ever lost must be discarded. It may be true that the vanguard of the trade union movement may learn from labor's defeats as well as from its victories, but anybody who has tried to organize a group of workers who bear the scars of a strike defeat will know how timid these workers can be and how hostile to organization. We stand for industrial unionism because that type of organization affords the means of greatest mobilization of workers in any given industry for a successful struggle and victory. Experience in the American labor movement has taught us that workers in certain crafts who went on strike, while other crafts were allowed to work, not only turned against craft unionism but against the whole idea of organization and collective action of the workers.

One of the pet arguments of the opponents of the industrial form of organization is that the interests of the minority groups (skilled workers) are neglected and are merged in the larger group of workers. Were this true, socialists would still have to take the position that the main interest of unionism should be the interest of the most exploited section of the workers and those who can least defend themselves because of their unfavorable position in industry.

We can not accept too readily the arguments of the craft unionists. Earlier we said that under favorable conditions the minority, or skilled, groups could win concessions for themselves if they ignored the interests of the larger group of workers. Actually, at the present state of technical development, and under present economic conditions, this is becoming increasingly less and less true. As a consequence of improved methods of production, which have in a large measure wiped out the importance of skill, and also because the captains of industry, so-called, have utilized their large resources artificially to stimulate the supply of trained craftsmen, the importance of the skilled mechanic in industry has declined. Experience teaches us that it is becoming more and more difficult for workers through craft organization and action to win or keep any gains.

The industrial unionists of today reject the hard and fast blue-print conceptions of industrial unionism of the I.W.W. Incidentally, their conceptions of industrial unionism, with the exception of the migratory workers, in the wheat-fields, lumber-camps and marine industry, never left the propaganda stage. The industrial unionism of the Knights of Labor, if it may be called that, is equally unacceptable. The Knights of Labor was a conglomeration of members, on craft lines, on industrial lines, with no industrial division or centralization on a national scale. Such an organization is incapable of national consolidation in any given industry, and less capable of concerted action.

A study of trade and industrial development of this country will show that a continual process of change is taking place in the method of manufacture, in the competition of products and the raw material entering into these products. Recognition of these facts must lead us to reject the blueprint conception of industrial unionism. It is indeed a serious matter when iron-workers conduct jurisdictional wars and strikes against carpenters over the hanging of metal doors

and window frames in a building. The iron-workers argue that the doors are metal; the carpenters that they always had set wooden doors, and, wood or iron, they would set the doors forevermore.

Yet a general approach to the organization question along industrial lines can be laid down. The application of this approach will have to be tempered by good judgment, historical background and attitude of the workers involved. The general underlying factors, in my opinion, as a basis for industrial organization are:

1. Each plant or enterprise should be considered as a single unit of organization.
2. This organization should be extended to all workers on a national scale.
3. Workers engaged in kindred industries or branches of production belong in one union, as do
4. workers engaged in the production of commodities in direct competition with each other; and
5. workers engaged in manufacturing, using the same type of raw material, or the same machinery, or methods of production, even though the products may be somewhat different when completed.
6. Last, but not least, we must consider the democratic character of the union claiming jurisdiction over the group of workers involved.

The decision of the United Mine Workers at its recent Washington convention to organize into its ranks, on a quasi-departmental basis, the coke and by-products workers is a move in the right direction. The relationship of this industry to the mining industry is obvious, coal being the basic raw material involved.

It is not beyond the realm of imagination, that had not the Machinists' Union been so set on organizing the skilled tool and dye makers apart from the rest of the automobile industry, this industry might have developed organization as a separate department of the Machinists' Union. The automobile industry, however, is so large in itself, and organization along independent lines has gone so far, that it is improbable that the automobile industry will ever find itself in the folds of the Machinists' Union.

It should be obvious that there is no need for a separate national union for workers engaged in the manufacture of textile machinery, and another for printing machinery, and another for shoe machinery, and still another, let us say, for sewing machinery, or metal instruments and tools. It is very obvious that there is no immediate competition for these groups of workers in so far as the finished product is concerned, although there may be, and is competition for jobs. Workers may, with a bit of readjustment, move from one type of factory to another, the source of raw material and the general technique of work being, in a general way, pretty much the same. In other words, while competition of finished product is absent, competition for jobs does exist and the wages of one group of workers does affect the other. It stands to reason that in each section of the machine building industry, a definite policy and uniform national agreement would have to be developed. Possibly there would be separate departments within the union, depending on how involved their separate problems were.

The gasoline-filling station attendants could without great stretch of the imagination, become a wing of the Oil Fields and Gas Well Refinery Workers' Union.

Though work of these two groups of workers is somewhat different, their relationship is recognizable to all.

Recently we read that the Radio and Allied Trades refused to be attached to the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. Prior to the order by the A. F. of L. that the Radio Workers join with Electricians there were several attempts to split these workers among the Electrical, Carpenters and Machinists Unions. Now these workers are being ordered to become affiliated as second class members to the craft dominated Electrical Workers' Union. The danger that the Electrical Workers will hand over part of the radio workers to the craft unions at a later time hangs over their heads. Meanwhile, they have no voice in the conduct of their sectional interests as part of the broader electrical equipment industry. Under these circumstances it is not surprising that the radio workers are fighting for their own national organization.

Had the Electrical Workers' Union taken the initiative in organizing the Radio Workers, showing sympathetic understanding of their problems, there would be no question as to the advisability of affiliating the radio workers with the A. F. of L. through the Electrical Workers' Union. The same problem exists for the Electrical Workers' Union in a somewhat different form in approaching the organization of public utilities, light and power, and telephone industries. The only way the international Brotherhood of Electrical Workers can hope to encompass the numerous sections of the electrical industry is by organizing them into their union on a departmental basis, along democratic and industrial lines.

Ample proof exists that the conservative elements in the A. F. of L. do not approach the craft problem strictly as a question of principle, but merely from the point of view of preserving the labor movement in the hands of, and in the interests of the skilled minority. Recently, in granting the United Automobile Workers Union a charter, the A. F. of L. awarded the auxiliary part plants to the Machinists Union. These plants have a key position in the auto industry, and properly fit into the Automobile Workers Union. Craft skill plays no greater part in them than in the average automobile factory. Yet, for reasons unexplainable, they have been awarded to the Machinists Union.

Some years ago the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers succeeded in organizing the telephone workers of New England. Instead of taking these workers in as a unit, the linemen, the installation and maintenance crew were organized into one local union. The telephone operators, though very important, were segragated into separate locals. As a secondary category, those workers who received lower wages, paid less dues and were given only half the voting privileges of the other workers in the national convention.

The Carpenters Union has been one of the pillars of craft unionism. Yet this union has for years maintained what is known as the so-called inside local. These local unions are industrial in character. They consist of the sash and trim mills, whose products in a large measure have replaced the craftsmen in building construction, the work being done on a factory machine basis. The closeness of these workers to the carpenters is easily recognizable. Another type of inside local in the Carpenters Union is that of the cabinet and furniture factories. Here the relation is not quite so obvious, except that the

wood, and a good deal of the machinery used, is the same as in the sash mill. Were the Carpenters Union really interested in carrying on a campaign to organize these workers, their attachment to that union would be a great aid because of organizational and financial resources. Secretly, the Carpenters Union views these mills as places where their members can work when things grow slow in the building trade—they are organizations of convenience.

More recently, some fifty thousand lumber and sawmill workers organized in federal locals, mainly in the Northwest, were awarded by the A. F. of L. Executive Council to the Carpenters Union. To say the least, this is not a craft group, nor are the majority of its members carpenters. They include a very large percentage of semi and unskilled workers. The irony of it all is that these workers, organized along industrial lines, are attached to a craft dominated union, whose votes are cast at A. F. of L. conventions by Mr. Hutchinson of the Carpenters Union against the extension of industrial unionism in other industries.

While we recognize that the movement for industrial unionism could never have taken on the momentum it has without the official support of such powerful unions as the United Mine Workers and the International Ladies Garment Workers, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, in the Committee for Industrial Organization, we must realize that if this movement is to succeed, it must be carried into the camp of the craft unionists. The Committee for Industrial Organization stands committed to a policy of organizing the basic industries not organized by the craft unionists, into industrial unions. It takes this position officially, regardless of whatever private opinions the individuals making up this movement may have on the question of amalgamating the craft unions with industrial unions. Together with the Committee for Industrial Organization, which is composed of international unions officially on record for industrial unionism, a progressive trade union movement must be developed, founded on the principle of reforming the labor movement along industrial lines. This movement must be taken to the rank and file and must be brought into the ranks of the craft union organizations, if it is to be ultimately successful. Of course, the fight for industrial unionism must be linked up with the broader fight to make the labor movement conscious of its class role in modern capitalist society.

Under the leadership of William Z. Foster, the Communist Party at one time held the leadership in such a movement. Due to its disruptionist dual union line, it lost its leadership and the movement petered out. That the C. P. has changed its line again is no reason why the progressives will again become their willing followers. The field is open for the socialists and the broad progressive elements, their allies, to lead the way. Industrial unionism has become the lever for progressive action in the American labor movement.

The A S M assumes no responsibility for signed articles. Such articles express the opinion of the writers. The A S M strives to serve as a free forum for all shades of opinion within our movement.

Agrarian Front

Marvin Halvorson

IT was only three years ago that mid-western farmers startled the nation with wide-spread foreclosure holidays and strikes, using more violence than their fellow workers in the city whom the farmers are said to condemn for violence.

This activity on the farm front presents us with the urgent question of the farmer and socialism. Socialists have been inclined to disregard the issue, but we must intelligently face its implications now. In Austria the failure of socialists to win a sizeable section of the agrarian element gave fascists the support of misguided peasants against the workers government of Vienna. Unless we socialists in America can successfully appeal to farmers we will meet the same defeat, even though we may have the solid backing of city workers.

Is the farmer so conservative that he will not lend his support to a genuinely radical movement for the abolition of capitalism? Will the American farmer be the mainstay of individualism?

Before we can thoroughly understand the American farmer we must study the social and economic conditions of which he is a product. What can be done here is merely to bring out suggestions for further research along this line. Frederick Jackson Turner was the first of the American historians who gave an economic interpretation of our historical and social development. He argued that our history could be understood only in the light of our expanding frontier, with its consequent economic conditions. This is an explanation which socialists hold essential to a proper understanding of our social forces.

The pioneer, on coming to America, found conditions vastly different from those of Europe. On the Continent a peasant would be likely to remain one throughout life. He was held within the bounds of custom and privilege and life was largely a matter of acceptance.

In America, however, one's possibilities seemed limited only by one's effort. The free lands to the West offered the chance of building a home and acquiring a degree of security. The pioneering farmer felt everyone should have equal opportunities and regarded his "betters" as being on an equal status. His independence fostered a spirit entirely unlike that of the European peasant. It resulted in a democratic individualism which has continued to be the dominant trait in the American farmer. Whether it has worked for good or evil it is the spirit which has caused him to revolt against conditions which seemed intolerable or destructive to the independence which he so highly valued.

From the time of Bacon's rebellion in the early Virginia colonial days, through the Whiskey rebellion of Pennsylvania farmers, to the election of Andrew Jackson to the presidency, we have witnessed the growing influence of the farmer in national affairs. In no European country had the peasants exerted such an influence over the government. This was the political expression of farmers whose ideology was a product of American conditions rather than a translation of European ideals.

With the rise of the industrial North, the influence of the farmers began to

decline. It was by no means moribund, however, for the years following the Civil War brought political revolts of real significance. During this post war period America experienced an unprecedented degree of industrial development and monopolization. The enormous exploitation and waste of our expanding capitalism exacted a toll from the farmers in the form of excessive railroad rates, increasing taxes, depreciated value of farm products and heavier debt burdens. It was to battle these abuses of the capitalist system that movements were born and grew by leaps and bounds. The programs of the Farmers Alliance, the Greenback party and the Populist movement demonstrate clearly that farmers were fighting abuses of the capitalist order rather than the system itself. There was little questioning of the basis of the profit system since the average farmer felt he had much at stake in the continuance of the system of private ownership.

In Europe, workers, organized into unions, soon began to undertake political action independent of bourgeois parties, while in America their efforts were confined to combination of their strength solely on the economic field. It was the farmers who took the lead in attempts at political realignments. Had workers been the dominant element in our social development, the revolt against capitalism might have had more class recognition and anti-capitalist character than it had under the leadership of the farmers. It is hardly necessary to argue with socialists that workers are the spearhead of the struggle against capitalism. Because farmers rather than city workers occupied that role in our political development, the populist point of view has continued to prevail in our "native radicalism".

That it is still prevalent is shown by the proceedings of the numerous conferences for third party action. Our danger lies in the fact that farmers will be swept into this new movement while still under the influence of demagogues and incipient fascists like Coughlin and the late Huey Long. The movement would be likely to develop nationalistic tendencies, with animosities directed toward certain groups in our capitalist set-up, such as the "international bankers". And too often those "international bankers" have been thought of as being synonymous with Jews.

Faced with that possibility, which should not be minimized, and the growing restlessness among the farmers, it is essential that we understand this question. For the penny foreclosure sales in the mid-west, the unrest among agricultural workers and the organization of sharecroppers in the South are only beginnings of the revolt of farmers against intolerable burdens. The spirit of resistance so dominant in the make-up of our farmers is being called forth by present economic and social conditions. AAA has only accentuated the differences between the rich farmer, the middle and poor farmer.

According to Department of Commerce figures, the farmer received slightly less than 7% of the national income in 1934. Although the number of dollars going to farmers in that year was an increase of about 10% over that of 1933, the actual percentage was somewhat less in 1934. Even these figures are not as good as they seem, for the Roosevelt farm program has benefited the rich farmer at the expense of the others. An indication of this trend was plainly shown in the 1934 Farm Business Record Report of the Iowa State College extension service. Records were

kept on 516 farms—the bigger farms. Cash income on these farms *tripled* in 1934—gained 300% against the 10% average increase. It meant that a huge group of farmers must get less than ever to make up for that increase.

The sharpening distinction between the rich and poorer farmers was strikingly brought out in advertisements of *Country Home,* an upper class farm journal. This magazine showed to other companies the folly of advertising in the ordinary farm periodical which reached only the average farmers. They are able to buy only shoddy goods and few of them. For, as they show, 20% of the farm income is produced by 65% of the farms—an average of $375 in 1934. But only 35% of the farms produced 80% of the farm income in that year—netting an average income of $2,717.

AAA did not solve any farm problem. It merely took a portion of the income of the poorer farmers and gave it to the not-so-poor. Norman Thomas' work in the South has disclosed the iniquities of AAA as it worked out to the benefit of the plantation owner.

Quite encouraging was the determined opposition to AAA on the part of the Farmers' Union. Of course, the Farm Bureau, whose Chicago convention Roosevelt addressed last fall, is nothing but a farmers' company union and is busy drumming up support for Roosevelt and his crop destruction program. A very healthy indication in the Farmers' Union, however, is their criticism of the AAA on the basis of its planning for scarcity. They hold that in an America which was not clothed, fed and housed sufficiently before the "late" depression, it is criminal to destroy farm products. Increasingly are they looking toward labor, the raising of whose buying power they feel to be the best guarantee of real economic progress. Now many Farm Unionists believe that their goal, "cost of production" can be achieved only through the abolition of the profit system. Their continued progress in a leftward direction is the most encouraging aspect of the farm situation.

Banks and insurance companies are rapidly taking over mortgaged land and it may not be long before we shall again see foreclosure holidays. The boost in certain farm prices is giving cause to the speculators for the raising of land values. Competent observers in the mid-west predict another land boom within a few years when the owners of foreclosed land, the banks and insurance companies, will unload their holdings at high prices to those who again wish to invest their money in "safe" properties. But the middle and poor farmers will not be benefited. Rather will they continue to decline into a state of peasantry. To whom will these farmers turn for guidance and leadership in their struggle for economic security?

There are some socialists who would dismiss this problem by saying that we will "have labor organize its party and let the farmers come to us if they wish". It would be wonderful if we could win over a large number of farmers in this simple manner but it wasn't done that way in Europe. They tried it. Yet only a short time ago a prominent socialist evaded the issue by asserting that workers are interested in socialism, but farmers are not.

In dealing with this question of farmers and socialism one must remember that we are not addressing farmers as a unified group. Our appeal must be directed to those farmers who have been dispossessed, the tenant farmer, the sharecropper, and the laborer on the

corporation farm. These types of farmers are fast losing middle class loyalties and illusions. Yet we cannot expect to bring them to the socialist movement unless we really work to that end. They may more easily fall into march behind the bandwagon of some share-the-wealth fascist demagogue. Thus our program has to be formulated with a full knowledge of the problems and attitudes of each of these groups.

Socialists have not been agreed upon the principles that should be carried out in the reorganization of our farm economy. To many it is solved by calling for a plan of collectivization, intending to win over the farmer by telling him that his future well being is best assured by the collectivization of farming. On the other hand there are socialists who have not intelligently faced the vital question of land ownership and operation.

The correct socialist position on the small farmer was ably presented by Engels in an article, "The Peasant Problem in France and Germany" which appeared in Neue Zeit.

> "When we are in possession of the powers of the state, we shall not even dream of forcibly expropriating the poorer peasants, the smallholders (with or without compensation), as we shall have to do in relation to the large landowners. Our task as regards the smallholders will first of all consist in transforming their individual production and individual ownership into co-operative production and co-operative ownership, not forcibly, but by way of example, and by offering social aid for this purpose. We shall then have the means of showing the peasant all the advantages of this change—advantages which even now should be obvious to him."

The farm platform of the Socialist Party adopted in 1934 was a remarkable advance over the points which in past years we have chosen to call programs. However, it fails to give a correct interpretation when it implies that individual operation of farms is a permanent feature of a socialist society. If the program would make it clear that socialists guarantee to the farmer the retention or redemption of his home and yet point out that economic and technological development may make a co-operative method of agricultural production more desirable in the future, we would deal with this question in a sound manner.

The recently perfected cotton picker will undoubtedly revolutionize the whole system of sharecropping. Where formerly it was more profitable to parcel out huge plantations into small tracts for families to work, it now becomes feasible to introduce large scale cotton farming. It is to that sort of development that we refer when speaking of changes in production methods. Where such large scale farming is practical we would favor farming by co-operatives. Whether it would be advisable to introduce that policy in most types of farming can only be determined by experimentation. Only through a process of education and actual demonstration of its advantages should we adopt a collective form of agriculture.

We can not expect farmers to join our movement though, if we only promise them a perfect economic system in some distant future. Only as we extend them aid in their struggles against foreclosures by banks and insurance companies, in their demand for relief and extension of feed and seed loans will farmers realize that socialists are sincerely interested in their welfare. For years the movement in Wisconsin seemed unable to penetrate the rural areas of that state. But the assistance

given them during their milk strikes and foreclosure holidays presented opportunities to socialists that today are bringing returns in organization and solidarity.

While there are socialists in various farm organizations, no uniformity of policy or activity is pursued. In some states socialists are leading "rump" or dual Farmers Unions; in one particular instance the split occurred because a faction, including socialists, supported the Farmers National Grain Corporation and later favored the AAA. No prestige is added to the Socialist Party when the National Farmers Union opposed the Roosevelt AAA and socialist farmers supported it.

Much of our thinking along these lines is faulty because we so little understand these situations. More discussion of the problems should appear in our party press. Unless it is done we shall continue to be ineffective in our attempt to win over the farmers. For instance, an article in the *American Socialist Quarterly* recently called attention to agricultural college graduates as potential farm organizers for the party without recognizing that the middle and poorer farmers hate the state colleges. The average farmer looks with disgust upon those institutions which train young men to produce more per acre and now come to tell farmers to plow under crops and reduce production. Instead, we can look forward to a sizeable group of young people in the Junior Farmers Union who have grown up amidst the difficulties and mistakes of their parents, and now in their organization study the economic solutions proposed. The intelligence and understanding of economics shown in their work promises to be of real value to our movement in the future.

Through such movements we should work, giving aid to farmers in their struggle for immediate demands, and demonstrating that their hopes lie with workers everywhere in the achievement of the co-operative commonwealth.

On the basis of this approach socialists can go to the farmers and win their support. The importance of this activity need not be emphasized further. Our task now is to prepare in light of present conditions and opportunities a program of struggle on this front.

A WORD ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTORS

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A Preface to Discussion

Jessie Wallace Hughan

IT is to be hoped that American socialism will soon be able to set itself seriously to the task, not only of building up the party organization, but of clarifying socialist thought on matters of theory and tactics.

The problem before us is no mere line-up of "Right" and "Left", with Karl Marx as the umpire.

We have indeed cause for pride in Marxian theory. At a time when even socialists were beginning to speak softly of Marx's explanation of crises and his prophecy of the break-up of capitalism, we suddenly found capitalism to be crumbling in sight of all, under circumstances which only Marxism could successfully analyze.

As for the nature of the society which should succeed the profit system, socialists have the perennial task of filling in the details for the broad sketch of a workers' co-operative commonwealth which Marx and Engels were too sagacious to complete. As an outline however, it stands high above controversy, accepted alike by right and left, and thanks to the research of present-day economists and to the large scale experimentation of Russia, socialists have now at hand a body of concrete proposals which probably approaches as nearly to a "blue-print" of the coming society as could be attained in the midst of industrial change.

It is the third division of socialist doctrine, dealing with the method of attaining the workers' commonwealth, which has furnished food for factionalism from the beginning, for upon this subject Marx and Engels were frankly experimental and have thrown comparatively little light. The immediate issues of our time, however, depend very directly upon the solution, provisional or otherwise, which may be offered to this problem by socialist doctrine. Our relations to fascism, communism, parliamentarism, to a Labor Party and to the United Front, go far deeper than personalities and organizations, than Stalinism, Trotskyism, the A. F. of L. and the "Daily Worker". Behind all these is the question: What deliberate methods does the Socialist Party propose to employ in order to bring in the workers' commonwealth?

It is obvious that our practical policy cannot be quarried out of Karl Marx as religious fundamentalists dig millenial prophecies out of the Old Testament. Such phrases as "rigorous causality", the "role of the proletariat", "the class character of the state", are good only for what they are worth, for the founders of scientific socialism, though marvelously farsighted, made no claim to omniscience, and were conditioned by 19th century thought as we by that of the 20th. Just as Marx's theory of surplus value stood upon the shoulders of the now outmoded classical economics, so his ideas of revolution reflected to some extent the pattern of the forties and sixties in Europe. Fortunately neither of these concepts is essential to the structure of socialist doctrine; and as to tactical problems

both Marx and Engels remained wisely open to conviction to the end of their lives.

Even the categories of "Right" and "Left" can contribute but little of value to the discussion, for consistency tends to be modified by circumstances, and it is hard to point to a leader or active group whose policy has continued due right or left for an appreciable period of years. Straight roads exist chiefly on paper, and the road to socialism has been blocked by avalanches, different for each country and decade, and unforeseeable by any but a supernatural Marx. Especially during the last twenty-five years has the path been confused by obstacles on the one hand and unexpected openings on the other,—by the World War, the Russian Revolution, the rise of fascism, and the great depression,—all the irregular rifts and debris of crumbling capitalism. Socialists in action have swerved now to the right and now to the left, but whether wrongly or rightly must be determined by reference, not to the compass, but to the progress made by each deviation toward the ultimate goal.

Particularly is it an undue simplification to approve or reject the practise of present-day Russia as a criterion of right or left. Soviet action has been dictated by complex conditions, and some of its policies have unavoidably proved strange bedfellows.

Its economic measures furnish an invaluable experiment in direct application of socialist principles, notwithstanding the uniqueness of Russian conditions,—hindered by a predominant peasant population, but favored by the presence of a vast undeveloped territory in the midst of a worked-out world.

A peculiar confusion, however, has been injected into socialist thought by the fact that the first country to adopt a deliberately Marxian policy was one that had been left almost wholly to one side in the direct march of capitalist development, and had derived its radical philosophy chiefly by intellectual infiltration from the more advanced industrial nations.

"Russia," said Voltaire, "was rotten before it was ripe," and the aphorism as to Russian culture casts a certain light upon its economic revolution. Particularly has this anachronistic quality affected the social and political policy of the Soviets. On the one hand, their twentieth century society is not, as with us, the child of 19th century democracy, but has sprung by a surprising mutation from a belated 17th century absolutism. It is not unnatural that their conception of government is to some extent an attempt to transfer the prerogatives of the absolute monarch to his successor, the absolute proletariat, without regard to the steps through which historical evolution has made group sovereignty practicable.

On the other hand, the type of revolution which Russia has brought into spectacular prominence is based largely upon the 19th or even the 18th century model, as combining in simultaneous or successive strokes the bringing in of the bourgeois and of the proletarian regimes. It was logical that the Bolshevik leaders, repeating in their own lives the vicissitudes of 1848, should accept, as Marx somewhat vaguely accepted, the revolutionary pattern of that day, rather than that, for example, of the British Labor Party, standing upon the last round of twentieth century capitalism. Accordingly, valuable as are the lessons of Russia in economic socialism, the Soviet policies as to revolution and consequent dictatorship are too dependent

upon peculiar Russian conditions to be discussed as a norm for socialist action.

Perhaps the most generally accepted standard of judgment as to right and left has been furnished by the policy of socialist groups regarding revolutionary tactics. Worthwhile discussion is impossible, however, unless the term revolution can be employed with a fair degree of consistency. Does revolution mean, as in the newspaper headlines or in the ideology of the D. A. R., any change of government effected by civil war, or does it signify an effectual transfer of power from one social class to another through any means whatever? By the first definition the uprisings in South America which merely shift office from one military clique to another approach more nearly the socialist conception than does the Industrial Revolution, which set the bourgeoisie definitely in the place of the landed aristocracy. If, however, the second definition is to accepted, we must rid ourselves more completely than at present of the popular association of revolutionary action with barricades and machine guns.

If the criterion of revolution, moreover, is not the degree of violence but the degree of effectual overturn, should we not consider revolution less as a means to an end than as the end itself? The goal of socialism is revolution, the effectual transfer of power from the minority of capitalists to the majority of workers, and Marxian economics has made clear that this involves no mere upturn of political sovereignty, but the complete replacement of the profit system by the co-operative commonwealth of workers. Revolutionary methods, therefore, are those which tend directly toward this goal, and may be either violent or non-violent, gradual or catastrophic, as efficiency may prescribe.

It follows, then, that the policies of post-war German socialism, or of the British Labor Party under Ramsay MacDonald, may be justly described as non-revolutionary, or "right", owing to the fact that both parties employed the degree of power they had attained, not to risk all in working directly toward the co-operative commonwealth, but to preserve their own ascendency by uniting with bourgeois parties to stave off the collapse of the national economy. On the part of the German Social Democracy this policy followed consistently from that of 1914, when it joined the other majority parties of the Continent in foresaking international socialism to defend the various national states. As far as the Labor Party was concerned, this right policy also was fairly consistent with that of the war years. It should be sharply distinguished, however, from the revolutionary policy of its socialist nucleus, the Independent Labor Party. Not only did the I. L. P., almost unique among European groups, refuse to co-operate with the bourgeois state in the world war, but it lost no time in repudiating the 1931 measures of MacDonald and in severing itself from the Labor Party.

If the definitions of revolutionary and non-revolutionary policy outlined in the foregoing are inadequate, others must be presented that are at least equally clear-cut, if revolutionary policy is to be taken as the touchstone of right and left.

The term revolution is not the only one to require more definite fixation. We need, for example, greater clearness in the use of the terms reformism and neo-reformism, gradualism and parliamentarism. Has the Communist Party turned reformist in its emphasis upon

unemployment insurance? Is Soviet Russia to be classed as gradualist in its long-continued tolerance of capitalism? Is parliamentarism synonymous with democracy, with political action, or with compromise?

What of the term democracy itself, and its opposite, dictatorship? Are not certain socialists yielding to a sub-conscious fascism when they take from "democracy" its etymological significance of government by the people and identify it with outmoded liberalism, and when they discard the use of "dictatorship" as a synonym for "autocracy", envisaging a dictatorship which is not a dictatorship? Continuing to "call a spade a spade" would seem, upon the whole, more conducive to sound reasoning than it is to tax one's ingenuity for some method of classifying it as a heart, club or diamond.

There is need, furthermore, of a more searching analysis of post-war developments in Europe and America, which will treat events and their causes in the cold light of history, not as the consequences of right or left policy and therefore to be approved or condemned. For example, the disaster and demoralization inseparable from the World War have been too often credited to the policy of whatever right or left party happened to prevail at the time in a given country.

When a socialist writer lumps the Roosevelt administration with the British Labor Party or states that "the one factor present in (post-war) Germany that was missing from the picture in England was inflation," he is speaking not as a historian but as a partisan.

There is perhaps too easy an acceptance among socialists of the communist generalization that fascism arises when the working-class is on the verge of coming into power. We need careful examination of events in Italy, Germany and Austria to discover whether 1922, 1933 and 1934 were actually years of the impending co-operative commonwealth or years when dissensions in the workers' movement had brought despair as to peaceful progress toward socialism and made it possible to marshal the timid middle class against the menace of communist violence.

Clarification will be helped still further if certain assumptions, which crop up in speech perhaps more frequently than in writing, could be kept out of use until they have been proved. One of these assumptions is that "gradual" is synonymous with "slow"; another, that an ideal which has never been completely realized, such as collectivism or democracy, is therefore unsound and should be scrapped for its opposite; a third, that armed resistance is an ace of trumps which needs only to be played to win the game.

It would make for clearness if we could succeed in keeping prophecy distinct from policy, and in envisaging revolutionary patterns as a whole rather than as disconnected measures. Discussions as to violence in the class struggle, for example, might be rendered less ambiguous, if also less impassioned, by bearing in mind that the point at issue is not whether violence does exist or is going to exist in an extreme form, but whether its deliberate employment should be given a place in socialist tactics.

Another moot point, the problem as to whether capitalists will submit peacefully to expropriation by a workers' government, could be freed from much psychological guesswork by setting it in two different revolutionary patterns,—on the one hand, the head-on collision

between organized capitalism and a proletarian coup d'etat, on the other hand, the gradual conquest of capitalist outposts with the aid of disaffected sections of the middle class, so that the workers' government when it arrives will have to deal only with the last stand of a class devoid of effective resources.

The future of the working-class in America and Europe, perhaps the fate of western civilization, will depend largely upon the manner in which twentieth century socialists succeed in completing the structure left unfinished by Marx and Engels. Even against our will we shall remain torn by dissensions and vacillations until the relations of our movement to organized labor, to dictatorship, and to international and civil war can be worked out with some degree of consistency.

For this task we need the wisdom of the right and of the left, not as opposing camps, but as complementary points of view. To-day may force a detour to one side and to-morrow to the other, for the road over sea and mountain cannot be straight as the airplane flies. So long, however, as we keep full in view the co-operative commonwealth of workers, our deviations cannot carry us far afield, and the policy of our groups can be trusted always to swing back into place, as the magnetic needle unfailingly swings back to the Pole.

ARTICLES TO COME

LABOR'S PEACE DILEMMA	*Devere Allen*
THE CONSTITUTION AND THE COURTS	*Louis B. Boudin*
A SOCIALIST REVOLUTION IN CONSTITUTIONAL GARMENTS	*Albert Goldman*
THE ITALIAN SITUATION	*Angelica Balabanoff*
SOCIALISTS AND THE UNEMPLOYED	*David L. Lasser*
YOUTH'S ECONOMIC PROBLEM	*Ernest Erber*
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SOCIALISM, SANCTIONS AND WAR	*Herbert Zam*
CONSUMERS' COOPERATIVES: A Neglected Socialist Weapon	*Benjamin Wolf*

Book Reviews

WHAT IS COMMUNISM

by Earl Browder, Vanguard Press, N.Y. $2.00.

The diagnosis is clear. It is a case of complete amnesia. It happened to Comrade Browder while he was a stranger in a strange land. One day in 1935, when he was a guest in Moscow, right after the Seventh Congress of the Communist International, he suddenly lost his memory. Everything that he had said and written for many years and for which he had been ready to fight, was completely forgotten. And up to the present, the poor man cannot remember anything of it. All that he remembers is that he is Earl Browder and a communist. But what Browder stood for and what communism meant before he became sick, he does not remember. In his new book "What is Communism" there is never a reference to the past, not even to his own writings.

The book is new precisely because it reveals a new Browder; otherwise there is nothing new in it. It simply reiterates the ideas and even uses the arguments of the right wing of the social democratic movement. Here you have a defense of class-collaboration, of soft-pedalling the class struggle, of ignoring the social revolution. It is a communism of love, of tolerance, of "sweetness and light." Browder wants all good people to come together and, by excluding what divides us, (class struggle, revolution, etc.) try to lighten the burden of the poor workers. Gone is his venom for which he was so famous. Not a mention of traitors, no social fascists. He even forgot the revolutionary upsurge of the masses. So complete is his amnesia!

It is hard to say what would happen to Browder if he were by chance to read Browder's "Meaning of Social Fascism."

The main-spring of Browder's communism is no longer the class-struggle. To be sure, he mentions the class-struggle in passing. In passing, he also mentions his old loves, social revolution, the dictatorship of the proletariat, Soviet America, but only in passing, only casually. These are now for Browder things of the distant future, ***Zukunfts Musik*** about which one need not bother now. At best, it may be left to the teachers and sudents of the Workers School.

The main-spring of Browder's new communism is not the class struggle but his patriotism, his unbounded love for his fatherland, his pride in being an American. "We Communists like this country very much." His love for America goes much further than simply liking his country. He feels the happiest of men that providence arranged it so that he was born in this country and nowhere else. "We can not think of any other spot on the globe where we would rather be than exactly this one" he declares. We shudder to think of the tragic consequences for Browder and his "we's" had they been born in Russia, France or England or any other "spot on the globe." Fortunately tragedy has been averted by fate.

Browder was born in America, and

he loves it very much, and is ready to fight Hearst because Hearst's love for America is not genuine. He is full of love, he is all for the "masses" because "we love the masses of the toiling people." There is even some love in him for the poor unfortunates who did not have the good fortune to be born in "the one spot on the globe" that Browder loves so much. These unfortunate foreigners after all "have worked harder for less wages on behalf of this country than anybody else." Out of his great love he therefore concludes that "they deserve, at a minimum, a little courtesy from those that would speak of Americanism." That's how great his love is! Ah, yes, he does not mind proclaiming it as "good Marxism" ("good Marxism" always follows the line) because he loves Marx too.

Time was when Browder loved to repeat Marx's dictum that the workers have no country, with the exception of course of "our Socialist Fatherland." That of course was in the dark days when Russia was for Bukharin nothing but "a point in geography." Bukharin has of course recanted since. The poor man is always recanting something. The *bon-ton* in Russia now is national pride, patriotism. "Holy Russia" has by decree become "Our beloved, our beautiful fatherland." Bukharin acquired a fatherland, and Browder acquired two. Of course Browder had a much easier time of it. He did not have to recant. He simply forgot.

All that Comrade Browder wants now is a farmer-labor party, which will be a true "peoples' front." He would prefer to have a party with real farmers and trade unions. He is even not discouraged by the fact that neither the farmers nor the trade unions are yet ready for a farmer-labor party. The doors of his party are wide open for all—Republicans, Democrats, bourgeois liberals, priests, rabbis, Father Divine, Upton Sinclair, Dr. Townsend, and "sections of the sprouting fascist or partly fascist organizations or tendencies, such as company unions, American Legion Posts and groups of the Coughlin and Long movements" ("The Communist", October 1935). All are Browder's potential allies. And, of course, if the worst comes to worst he can always get together an "enormous conference" of all the communist innocent clubs, women's councils, and minorities in the trade unions, and proclaim the birth of a "farmer-labor party." You leave it to Comrade Browder. If he has decided to have a farmer-labor party he'll have one.

We must not forget to mention that the book sells for fifty cents, paper bound. Cheap, isn't it?

Haim Kantorovitch.

MARCHING! MARCHING!

by Clara Weatherwax, John Day, N. Y. $1.90.

The *New Masses* last year announced a prize of $1000 for the best proletarian novel. The award went to *Marching! Marching!* by Clara Weatherwax. In the circumstances we are justified in concluding (1) that, in the opinion of the *New Masses* editors this is a good book; (2) that, again in their opinion, it was the best book submitted in the contest; (3) that *Marching! Marching!* is a fair example of what the *New Masses* and the Communist Party generally have in mind when they speak of "proletarian literature". These conclusions are fair, since it was within the rights of the *New Masses* to withhold the prize if no book worthy of recognition was to be found among the manuscripts presented.

If, then, ***Marching! Marching!*** is to be considered typical, the first requirement of the proletarian novel is dullness. This book is incredibly dull. Its strained effort at staccato speed results in an almost intolerable diffuseness. Miss Weatherwax, like so many others who have climbed on the communist bandwagon, is torn between an earlier allegiance to James Joyce and her more recent enthusiasm for the striking workers. She makes all her workers talk like Stephen Daedalus, but she makes them sweat and smell a-plenty! It has not yet occurred to her that the James Joyce method does not consist merely in scrambling a story beyond recognition. Nor has it occurred to her that the careful reader will pay Joyce the compliment of slow and attentive reading, but will throw her turgidity aside in justified impatience. The casual reader (other than devotees of the C.P. church) will give her pages the rapid once-over, and throw the book aside in disgust.

The second prerequisite of the proletarian novel, if this book is to be our criterion, is that the characters must talk like *Daily Worker* editorials. Something tells us that Miss Weatherwax is not at all stupid. She judged correctly that a little crude flattery of this sort would go a long way. Time has played her a cruel jest, in that it compelled her to write her book at a moment when the new line excluded juicy references to socialist betrayers and to social fascism. A few years earlier or a few years later her workers might have indulged happily in an orgy of sadistic analysis of all but the comrades of the C. P.

The third prerequisite of the proletarian novel, if we may use this book as measure, is apparently an invincible optimism. No matter how much the workers may toil, sweat, and stink; no matter how bitter and brutal may be the affairs of the bosses, there is a better day a-coming, brothers. Pippa passes, Pollyanna wins again. The C. P. is on the watch, and all's well with the world. Labor goes marching, marching, even if the militia is posted on the sidewalk.

Things are not like that. The working-class is not nearly so class-conscious as Miss Weatherwax says it is. Not nearly so large a slice of it as she implies is interested in communism, so brave or so ready to strike for its rights. Not nearly with such unanimity do they talk like Clarence Hathaway or Joe Brodsky. ***Marching! Marching!*** does not suggest that it represents some workers. It implicitly asserts representation of all workers. And this claim is unfounded.

Not all the piety in the world makes a novel out of a tract. ***Pilgrim's Progress,*** perhaps the best fictional tract in English, yet remains, even to the less discriminating, a sermon rather than a story. There is a place for tracts, even for tracts disguised as fiction. But a novel, no matter how tendentious must be more than a tract. Noble intentions and a correct position are not enough. The novelist must know people and must know how to present them as living creatures. He must know even those to whom he is antagonistic. Even his villains must be alive and credible. Miss Weatherwax never rises above the level of the Alger books, or of the Elsie Dinsmore series. Her workers are all angelic. Her bosses are all villainous. Life is not like that, as Albert Halper and even Upton Sinclair know.

Her inability to paint living people, her sterile imitation of an unassimilated Joyce, and her servility to the C.P. are

enough and more than enough to explain why this book is already as dead as the great auk.

David P. Berenberg.

THE COMING AMERICAN FASCISM,

by Lawrence Dennis, Harper & Brothers, N. Y. $2.50.

FASCISM AND NATIONAL SOCIALISM,

by Michael T. Florinsky, The Macmillan Company, N. Y. $2.50.

Except for the fact that both of these books are concerned with the immensely popular and timely subject of fascism, there is little justification for considering them together. Dennis' book is about what one would expect from this gentleman who obviously aspires to be the intellectual prophet, if not the actual leader, of American fascism.

Keen enough to recognize the crisis of liberal capitalism and shrewd enough to see that only through "control" may the owning class continue to enjoy the privileges of exploitation, he is still unable to face economic realities and to pursue a thought relentlessly to its conclusion.

The author advances as a solution to present day capitalism's economic ills a brand of "planned debtless economy" which he is careful to assert, differs materially from Italian and German fascism. Despite this disclaimer, the reader who worries through 308 pages of "social worker-cum-New Deal" prose will be at a loss to discover any essential differences between Mr. Dennis' scheme and the advance promises of Mussolini and Hitler. This would not be important except for the fact that Mr. Dennis, after showing the parlous position of liberal capitalism, carefully refrains from pointing out the economic condition of Italy and Germany today. Is their life so much more abundant than that of the other capitalist countries?

Mr. Dennis has tasted of Marx, Nietzsche and Darwin and in his writing he attempts to make a synthesis of what he would consider to be the best in these great thinkers. A valiant attempt —but it doesn't somehow come off, notwithstanding the solemnity and learnedness of his style.

He is obviously enamoured of the theory of economic determinism and invokes it when it can aid him but does not scruple to throw it aside when it threatens to become embarrassing. Witness this gem of rigorous economic thinking,

> "The truth is that men want leadership in creative adventure and not leadership to a promised land which their descendants, but not they, shall enter. Indeed, men as a whole (sic) have never really wanted to be finally settled in a promised land flowing with milk and honey, with no further adventure left except that of growing fat on the milk and honey. It is the process of leaving Egypt and wandering through the wilderness in search of something new and different that men enjoy. It was this motivation that settled the new continents and produced modern capitalism."

However, the philosophical shortcomings of its doctrine have never proved a hindrance to the flourishing of fascism and Mr. Dennis' book is a model of lucidity and tight reasoning next to "Mein Kampf". "The Coming of American Fascism" could serve as well as another book as the "Kapital" of fascism, especially so since all the trimmings are there—dictatorship of the

elite—control (better known as terrorism)—the subordination of women, etc., etc.

Dr. Florinsky has examined with his usual calmness and impersonality the twin systems of Italy and Germany. There is nothing new or startling that he finds to reveal. If aloofness is the *sine qua non* of scientific investigation the author is *the* man for the job. He allows nothing to interfere with his search and consequently, while German and Italian fascism receive the fairest treatment it would be possible to imagine, the conclusions that are ultimately drawn are as deadly as bichloride tablets.

Granting fascism every virtue possible, Dr. Florinsky's verdict on its ability to perform ultimately what it set out to do is negative. A guarded negative (too guarded for this reviewer) but nevertheless, a negative. Only once does he let himself go and that is when he is discussing Nazi finances (which he as well as all observers agree to be the crux of the matter).

"With me was a pleasant young German, a government officer of the new generation, jolly and athletic. Still in his early twenties, he had grown up in the atmosphere of National Socialism. He had fought the Fuehrer's battle on street corners and had now received his reward in the shape of an appointment as treasurer of the local organization of the National Socialist Party. He was full of the most exuberant enthusiasm and boundless devotion to the cause and he was immensely proud of his uniform, his badges, the importance of his office, his part in the Hitler movement. To my rather indiscreet question about the condition of the finances of his organization, he exclaimed with his unfailing enthusiasm: "Kolossal schlimm!" (perfectly awful). This verdict probably sums up the financial position of Germany and, since the beginning of the East African campaign, of Italy as well."

Despite, or probably because of Dr. Florinsky's measured analysis, his book will prove more useful than one written from a more impassioned point of view in exposing the economic absurdities and political and intellectual viciousness of that latest stage of decaying capitalism called fascism.

David Felix

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